



Universidad Tecnológica  
de Pereira

Facultad  
de Bellas Artes y Humanidades

# ACADEMIC WRITING REFERENCE HANDBOOK



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Colección Textos Académicos



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# 1.

## OVERVIEW AND ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

In this chapter, you will find...

**The rationale for using the handbook and the research study that supports the implementation of this multi-strategy approach to writing.**





Writing academically in a foreign language (L2) involves grammatical and lexical expertise, and it definitely implies having a set of skills to create texts that are both accurate and substantial. In tertiary education contexts, students are compelled to use higher-order thinking skills in their compositions since expectations are more demanding and seek to meet the international quality standards of the 21st century. However, according to Yang (2016), professors do not obtain the expected results when teaching students to write, not even from the most studious learners. Moreover, he states that the lack of writing ability among second language university students is mainly caused by deficient teacher instruction, negative first language transfer, and scarce teaching materials and methods.

Indeed, one of the reasons why there is a limited number of national scientific publications in international journals is language limitations as stated in a study conducted by Colombian Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (COLCIENCIAS, 2016). Despite this pervasive lack of academic writing competences, there are, ironically, very limited research-based resources for English Language Learners (ELL) to guide them in elaboration of their academic products.

A study focusing on academic writing skills in higher education settings conducted by Marulanda and Martínez (2017) showed that learners require structural support in the development of their foreign-language compositional skills as they are not usually familiar with the discourse demands of such texts, and they lack strong academic literacy foundations in their mother tongue. Furthermore, the authors demonstrated the positive impact of genre-based instruction, systematized feedback, and peer-tutoring in the improvement of learners' academic written products. This study, consequently, laid out the foundations of a recently institutionalized academic writing assistance center, which is justified on partial results of a new ongoing research project (Marulanda & Martínez, 2018), and intended to provide students with continuous support in the process of composing texts for academic purposes. As one of the tenets of this current project is to foster continuous assistance, students should not only receive face-to-face tutoring, but also have access to meaningful resources that they can autonomously examine to meet the objectives they are expected to reach. Thus, this Academic Writing Reference Handbook (AWRH) will serve as a supplementary instrument to facilitate the improvement of writing skills across the curriculum.

## 1.1 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

This handbook is grounded on partial results obtained in the research project “The Power of Systematized Assistance in the Development of Academic Writing Skills among English Language Learners” conducted by Professor Nora Lucía Marulanda Ángel, Ph. D. and Juan Manuel Martínez. The investigation was focused on implementing a multi-strategy approach to improve sixth semester students’ academic writing skills from Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. The Writing Process Approach (WPA), systematized feedback, and ongoing tutoring were the components of this multi-strategy approach. As this project is the basis of the AWRH, we will present some segments of the data analyzed to support the methodologies suggested throughout the chapters.

This Academic Writing Reference Handbook (AWRH) is grounded on the results of the research project “The Power of Systematized Assistance in the Development of Academic Writing Skills among English Language Learners” conducted by Marulanda and Martínez in 2018. The investigation was focused on implementing a multi-strategy approach to improve sixth semester students’ academic writing skills from Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. The Writing Process Approach (WPA), systematized feedback, and ongoing tutoring were the components of this multi-strategy approach. As this project is the basis of the AWRH, we will present some segments of the data analyzed to support the methodologies suggested throughout the chapters.

This AWRH is divided into five chapters that expose how specific methodologies can help ELL students improve their academic writing skills. In this context, the AWRH’s content focuses on: (1) the WPA comprising several steps that will facilitate students’ writing tasks composition; (2) the Genre-based Approach aimed at increasing students’ awareness on the different features each genre has; (3) Error analysis which enhances learners’ metacognitive processes in writing; (4) Formative assessment where feedback is conceived as a tool to better guide students’ learning processes. In addition, some powerful hints are included in order to cover other aspects that are equally important for the development of academic writing skills.

Specifically, this Academic Writing Reference Handbook (AWRH) intends to help students understand the significance of following the writing process steps as well as to highlight the particular features related to descriptive, reflective, argumentative and expository texts required in the university-level courses. Additionally, a very

“instrumental” component of this handbook includes instructional and referential guidelines for professors to support and evaluate student’s written works.

## **1.2. OBJECTIVES:**

- To raise awareness on the importance of following the steps of the WPA to facilitate the composition of academic texts.
- To provide students with samples from four different genres they can use as references to compose more assertive texts.
- To provide professors with effective instructional/assessment rubrics to support students’ written compositions across disciplines.
- To raise awareness of the most frequent errors in order to minimize their recurrence.





## 2.

# A FRAMEWORK FOR ACADEMIC WRITING ASSISTANCE

In this chapter, you will find...

**The theoretical framework with the definition of each of the concepts developed in this handbook.**



Throughout the history of academic writing instruction, professors have used several methods to teach writing, ranging from product-oriented to process-oriented approaches. Fifty years ago, the product-oriented approach to writing was widely used to introduce writing to EFL students. In the later, the correct use of grammatical and syntactical structures was prioritized, and more importance was given to the final product than to the writing process itself. In the 60s and 70s, there was a shift in the instruction focus, so researchers started to promote a more process-oriented and dynamic teaching method. In contrast to the traditional product-oriented pedagogy, the WPA encourages professors to present writing as a means to create meaning; this implies valuing the construction of clear ideas, their polishing, and the final organization. Nevertheless, this writing model does not neglect form. Even though this approach's main objective is not to focus on language nuances such as grammar, syntax and punctuation, Coffin et al. (2003) cites Delpit (1995) to state that “the explicit teaching of the forms and conventions of academic writing must accompany any focus on process in order for students to gain control of dominant academic forms” (p.10). As a matter of fact, a healthy balance between attention to form and language functions was key in the multiple strategies used to improve ELL academic writing as reported by Marulanda and Martínez (2017).

Fundamental to this process is ongoing assistance where feedback allows the continuous improvement of students' compositions. Nonetheless, feedback must be carefully given, otherwise, it would create negative washback (Goeller & Kalteissen, 2008). For example, in tutoring sessions, it is not recommended to do the work for them nor to overemphasize their errors as tutees may become dependent on the feedback or feel frustrated while writing. According to Coffin et al. (2003), “Institutions should ensure that appropriate feedback is provided to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement” (p.102). In order to do this, the author proposes three essential components that must be evident in a tutoring session: positive comments, constructive criticism, and suggestions for improvement. In other words, there should be a balance between correcting the errors and highlighting the good work, so that students are aware of the aspects that need improvement without undermining their efforts.

This handbook's theoretical foundations rely on five important constructs that represent the pedagogical framework delineated in this academic text.

## **2.1. ACADEMIC WRITING**

To understand what academic writing entails, it is necessary to discern the meaning of writing itself; according to Tarigan (1994), writing is to produce symbols that represent a language, and these symbols can only be read and understood by members of the same linguistic community. Depending on the purpose and context of writing, its characteristics change, and its demands vary both at the linguistic and content knowledge levels. In particular, Irvin (2010) considers academic writing as all the writing tasks devoted to fulfill academic purposes.

## **2.2. THE WRITING PROCESS APPROACH**

As part of the findings of Marulanda's and Martínez's study (2017), students typically skip most of the steps of the writing process; in fact, they often write a product once and turn it in. The WPA is a student-centered approach which conceives writing as an iterative process where planning, drafting, revising, and feedback take place. Consequently, teachers and students are provided with a scheme where writing is not linear but circular. WPA aims at facilitating the process of writing for professors and learners since the constant teacher-student interaction involved in the feedback-revising faces enables instructors to maximize students' potential in compositional skills.

## **2.3. THE GENRE-BASED APPROACH**

In writing, genre refers to the particular purpose of the text and its series of characteristics that help the writer communicate the message. The most common academic genres are description, reflection, argumentation, and exposition which may vary based on their topic and audience. It is important that students are exposed to a variety of genres and discourse structures to prevent them from stagnating at low levels of writing such as descriptive texts.

This approach aims at raising "learners' awareness of both the rhetorical organization and the linguistic features closely associated with the genre" (Henry & Roseberry, 1998, p.147). Given the fact that one of the foci of this teaching method looks at establishing the specific tone and register of each genre, it contributes to academic writing as it determines the specialized vocabulary and discourse style students can use. For example, when students are asked to write argumentative essays, they can find in this handbook not only samples but also the type of language and discourse structures required for this kind of writing task.



## **2.4. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

One of the most effective strategies to support students in the process of strengthening and polishing their written work is ongoing feedback. Thus, formative assessment represents another significant component in writing instruction, for it transcends numerical scores and sheds light on the specific areas that need improvement. As Brookhart (2013) puts it, formative assessment “is an active and intentional learning process that partners the teacher and students to continuously and systematically gather evidence of learning with the express goal of improving student achievement” (p.102).

### **2.4.1. RUBRICS**

Brookhart (2013) defines rubrics as “a coherent set of criteria for students’ work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria” (p. 4). They make the assessment process faster, easier, and more objective. More significantly is that, through the use of rubrics, the assessment process can be institutionalized in the sense that the expected students’ outcomes in writing can be shared with other faculty members. This, in turn, will result in an articulated process of continuous assistance to students in their efforts to produce high-quality written work. Additionally, if the assessment results are shared, insightful decision can be made about instructional practices used by composition teachers as well as other faculty members.

## **2.5. ERROR ANALYSIS**

In an effort to provide systematized and focused feedback to students’ on their written products, it is rather useful to start with a knowledge base of the typical errors made by ELLs. Literature shows that typical areas of difficulty range from morphological to style errors, as presented by Thewissen (2013):

- Formal errors: spelling or morphological errors that result in a non-existent English word.
- Grammatical errors: errors that break the general rules of English grammar.
- Lexical errors: errors involving the lexico-semantic properties of words or phrases (conceptual, collocational, connotative).
- Lexico-grammatical errors: errors that violate the lexico-grammatical properties of words (erroneous dependent prepositions, erroneous complementation patterns, or countable/uncountable noun confusion).
- Punctuation errors: errors that target punctuation problems (confusion between punctuation markers, missing or redundant markers).
- Word redundant/missing/order errors: unnecessary use of words, missing necessary words, or misplaced words.
- Style errors: sentence fragments and incomprehensible sentences.





# 3.

## THE WRITING PROCESS APPROACH: A ROAD MAP FOR SUCCESSFUL WRITING

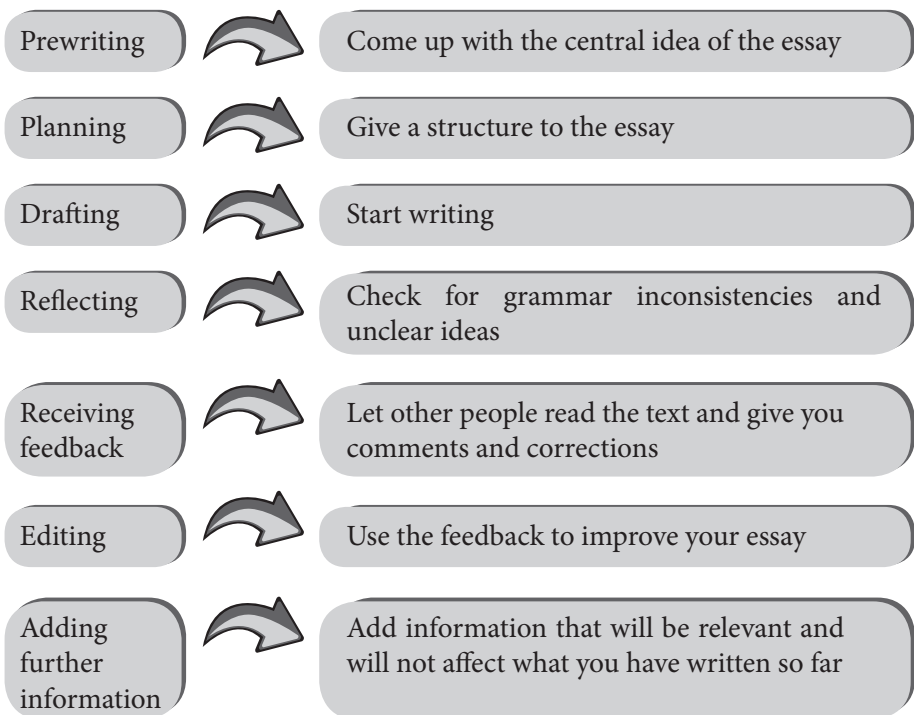
In this chapter, you will find...

**The steps of the Writing Process Approach illustrated with students' samples.**



Whether you are a college professor looking for alternatives to teach writing or a student desperate to find a way to accomplish difficult writing tasks, you must know that writing is not something you learn once after taking a course. Writing is a complex skill that requires an iterative process with well-defined steps that need to be followed to ensure successful products.

Effective writers approach the compositional process differently, and this handbook is a suggested writing guide to undertake your writing tasks and should not be followed verbatim. Indeed, the WPA represents a map that shed lights into your writing path. Therefore, in this chapter, we will present a seven-step writing process which entails prewriting, planning, drafting, reflecting, receiving feedback, editing, and adding further information.



When writers understand and use the process approach, they improve two elements (Goldstein & Carr, 1996; Akinwamide, 2012; Bayat, 2014): the quality of their finished products, and their writing skills as they learn from their mistakes and take advantage of others' experience. Consequently, we will characterize each of the writing process' steps with a brief description of what they entail.

### 3.1. PREWRITING

This is where everything starts. The most important aspect in this stage is to select the topic and start brainstorming some ideas. Generally, when professors give writing assignments to their students, they provide them with a topic or list of topics to write about, but if that is not your case, try to find a topic that inspires you by searching information from different sources. Once you have a topic, freewriting, which is letting your thoughts flow without focusing on form, is an excellent strategy to expand your ideas and create a rough overview of what the text will be about. Using mind maps, outlines, spider grams, or any other tool to flesh out your ideas is also recommended. Here, you need to write as much as possible without being concerned about grammar or spelling.

In the following section, we will show the process a student from an Academic Writing course followed to write an argumentative essay about the best teaching method. He had to take a stand and decide whether it was better to have lectures in classes or open discussion. He started with a free writing exercise to generate some ideas.

What is better? Lectures or open discussions?  
 I prefer open discussions. Why?  
 Students can express their opinions  
 Autonomous learning

### 3.2. PLANNING

Now, all the loose ideas must be put together in a clear and coherent outline. It is time to sort through all your notes and select the words and concepts that will compose your essay. It does not need to be complex and full of complete sentences, but as this outline will be the skeleton of your text, it needs to contain the main ideas and the thesis statement (See Chapter 6). After creating the outline, you can continue doing research about the topic; that exploration will let you polish your outline by adding, replacing, or removing the necessary information.

## EXAMPLE

**Outline:** Open discussions or lectures

### INTRODUCTION

**Topic:** Lectures vs. open discussions

**Thesis statement:** open discussions are the right thing to do, because it gives students the opportunity to express their opinions and also encourages them to be more autonomous.

### BODY PARAGRAPH 1

- Giving opinions
- New material for the learning process

### BODY PARAGRAPH 2

- Autonomy
- Develop a position through research

## 3.3. DRAFTING

You have chosen a topic, selected the main ideas of the essay, created a thesis statement, and thought about the organization of the text, so now, the next step is to write the paper. If your outline is effectively done and includes the essential components of your essay, all you need to do is take those ideas and develop the text. The focus of the drafting stage is on the content, so ideas should be stated clearly and in detail. Thus, we recommend you concentrate mostly on the meanings rather than the forms, for grammar will be revised later.

### First draft:

*The methodology in which classrooms are conducted affects the learning process of any student. Choosing between lectures or open discussions dictates if the learning process is good or bad. In my opinion, open discussions are the right thing to do, because it gives students the opportunity to express their opinions and also encourages them to be more autonomous.*

*When a student gives his opinion about a certain topic, he is constructing knowledge; he is actively receiving plain information, but he also is finding a reason as to why new material would be useful for his learning experience. this way students are more likely to internalize the new knowledge.*

*Autonomy plays a great role on students learning process. If a student feels motivated enough to go beyond a topic covered inside the classroom means that he is being autonomous. this is what a class that allows students to discuss can achieve, because in order to be able to discuss, that student must have a position and this position can be developed by his own research and reflection.*

*To conclude, classroom that allow students to discuss are way better than lectures, because they get the opportunity to express their opinions about a certain topic and also because they will feel more motivated to be autonomous” –Taken from Student A’ sample.*

### 3.4. REFLECTING

Once your draft is completed, it is crucial that you revise it. It is advisable to read the text out loud several times looking for grammar, spelling, syntax, and vocabulary issues. Then, read the text again as if you were not the writer to see whether you could understand the writer’s viewpoint as well as the main ideas. This stage requires that you ask yourself different questions such as:

- Are my ideas organized?
- Is my thesis statement clear?
- Is the text developed in a coherent way, so that its ideas are logically connected?
- Am I sharing strong details?
- Should I include more information or take some away?

Based on the answers you obtain, you can modify the text or even change it to start over. You need to analyze the key aspects as the tone, register, and style and the subtle aspects such as spelling. Additional ideas and details can be incorporated to give depth to your paper.

### 3.5. RECEIVING FEEDBACK

You may think that all the process is done, but receiving others’ opinions and comments is fundamental in the WPA. Professors, tutors, or even peers are excellent sources of feedback that can strengthen the clarity and effectiveness of your text. Also, you might have skipped some errors when revising, and those can be easily noticeable to an external reader. Exchanging texts with a classmate is a useful strategy to receive and give feedback to enhance your writing performance as well as to learn how to give opinions about other people’s writing helps you to improve your own.



When he finished the draft, Student A received feedback from the professor. Underlined you will see the parts where mistakes were found.

*The methodology in which classrooms are conducted affects the learning process of any student. Choosing between lectures or open discussions dictates if the learning process is good or bad. In my opinion, open discussions are the right thing to do, because it gives students the opportunity to express their opinions and also encourages them to be more autonomous.*

*When a student gives his opinion about a certain topic, he is constructing knowledge; he is actively receiving plain information, but he also is finding a reason as to why new material would be useful for his learning experience. this way students are more likely to internalize the new knowledge.*

*Autonomy plays a great role on students learning process. If a student feels motivated enough to go beyond a topic covered inside the classroom means that he is being autonomous. this is what a class that allows students to discuss can achieve, because in order to be able to discuss, that student must have a position and this position can be developed by his own research and reflection.*

*To conclude, classroom that allow students to discuss are way better than lectures, because they get the opportunity to express their opinions about a certain topic and also because they will feel more motivated to be autonomous –Taken from Student A' sample.*

### 3.6. EDITING

Take advantage of the valuable input provided in the feedback and correct your text. This will help you both get closer to your final product, and be more aware of certain grammatical mistakes you may unconsciously make. This is the moment to pay special attention to conventions (grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary) and content (clarity and coherence of ideas), so you can come up with an improved version of the essay.

With the feedback received from the professor, the student presented a corrected version:

*The methodologies conducted in the classroom affect the learning process of any student. Choosing between lectures or open discussions dictates if the learning process is good or bad. In my opinion, having open discussions is a good strategy to implement in class due to the fact that they give students the opportunity to express their opinions and also encourage them to be more autonomous.*

*When a student gives his opinion about a certain topic, he is constructing knowledge. The student is not only receiving plain information, but also giving value to this new material that will be useful for his learning experience. This way, students are more likely to internalize the new knowledge.*

*Autonomy plays a great role on students' learning process. If a student feels motivated enough to go beyond a topic covered inside the classroom means that he is being autonomous. That is why, a class that allows students to discuss can make them take positions and develop their cognition as they need to do research and reflect upon the information.*

*To conclude, open discussions are better than lectures because they provide students with the opportunity to express their opinions and increase learners motivation and autonomy. –Taken from Student A' sample*

### 3.7. ADDING FURTHER INFORMATION

After editing the text, you may want to add even more information to solidify your arguments, so you will go back to the drafting stage and write a new version. The more feedback you receive, the more possibilities you have to produce a highly qualified text; this is why the process approach takes students' writing skills to another level by enhancing their written products' content and form.

#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

56% of participants in the action research study conducted by Marulanda and Martínez (2018) reported following the process approach to writing frequently as they consider it effective to improve the organization of ideas, the reduction of errors, and the increase of metalinguistic awareness.



# 4.

## GENRE-BASED APPROACH: THE POWER OF PURPOSEFUL WRITING

In this chapter, you will find...

**The most commonly used academic writing genres, their structure,  
recommended language and students' samples.**



Now that you know the process of writing, it is necessary for you to understand what a text genre is as well as its variations since it will definitely help you write assertive academic compositions. In this chapter, we will address descriptive, expository, reflective and argumentative essays, which are some of the most common genres you are asked to write at the university level.

## 4.1. DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

### 4.1.1. What is a Descriptive Essay?

The descriptive essay is a genre that requests you to describe an object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, among others. This genre can also encourage you to create a written account of a particular experience; accordingly, when you write a description, remember that your goal is to recreate a situation on the reader's mind.

**NOTE:** Knowing the purpose of the genre will help you determine the type of language and structure of the text.

### 4.1.2. What type of language should I use?

#### 1. Use clear and concise language.

This means that words are chosen carefully, particularly for their relevance in relation to what you are intending to describe. Avoid general descriptive adjectives like good, bad, awful, or beautiful because they might show bias on your description. Instead, use the subject/object's factual characteristics such as appearance or location.

#### **EXAMPLE:**

**Pristine** river waters merge into the **calm** ocean.

**RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!**

In the analysis done by Marulanda and Martínez (2018) on undergraduate written products, from a total of 274 writing-related errors, the misuse of vocabulary initially represented 35% of the errors identified in descriptive samples. After six months of ongoing tutoring, vocabulary mistakes constituted 23% from a total of 115 errors.

**2. Use connectors of sequence**

When describing something, it might be necessary to indicate events or features through a sequence. For this reason, it is recommended to use connectors such as “first”, “secondly”, “lastly”, “after that”, “then”, etc. In this way, the essay will be organized, and the reader will be able to follow you.

**E-resource:** Visit the following link <https://www.engvid.com/english-writing-sequencing-first-next-finally/> or scan this QR code to watch a lesson about the use of connectors of sequence, and practice through easy tests.



**NOTE:** Depending on the subject/object you are describing, use connectors of addition and emphasis.

**4.1.3. How should I structure my essay?**

In college, we are asked to write essays composed by one introduction, two or three body paragraphs, and one conclusion. Here, we will not tell you the exact number of paragraphs your essay should have, however, we can tell you the aspects you can include in each of them.

**NOTE:** Remember outlining your ideas in a chronological order before starting to write.

#### 4.1.3.1. Introduction

The most important part of your essay is the introduction as you have the power of engaging your reader. In order to briefly introduce the subject or the object of the essay, we recommend you to think of a hook that will call your readers' attention. After that, it is necessary to include some background information about the topic, which can go from general to specific. Thus, if the readers are not familiar with the topic, they will have an overview of what they are going to read. Lastly, finish your introduction with a thesis statement, either blue print or general (See chapter 6), where you mention the aspects you will be developing in the next paragraphs.

##### EXAMPLE

**Topic:** brief description of a science lesson in an EFL classroom

*Nowadays, you could find different teaching methods that allow professors to boost learning and accomplish teaching goals. However, most of language teachers have issues with the instructional methods they use for schooling. Despite this fact, I had the opportunity to observe an experienced teacher who divided a lesson into three different sections to help her students achieve a learning goal–Taken from Student B' sample.*

#### 4.1.3.2. Body Paragraphs

This is where you make your essay stronger, so you have to elaborate on your body paragraphs cautiously. The first sentence or the second sentence should be a topic sentence where you clearly state what the paragraph will be about without including details. After that, it is essential to start developing your supporting ideas, and provide examples to solidify your description. Keep in mind to describe every particular aspect of the subject/object based on what the assignment specifically asks you to consider.

The more examples you give, the better the readers' mental representation will be. In general, the body paragraphs have between two and three supporting sentences, but this actually depends on other variables, mostly connected to the nature of the assignment. Finally, the paragraph could end with a transition sentence that includes the closure of the paragraph and the opening of the next one.

**NOTE:** Be careful with the use of connectors, for it is not necessary to start each paragraph with a connector of sequence. Keep the flow naturally.

*During the first section of the class, the teacher implemented a “before-reading” set of activities. To begin with, the tutor allowed students to write their ideas about wild spotted cats and share their thoughts with their partners. After that, there was a student-teacher interaction in order to clarify some group doubts. Later, the teacher shared these animals’ characteristics, and children were asked to express their ideas about this topic. Finally, the instructor showed some words that are used to compare and contrast in order for students to be prepared for the next stage*—Taken from Student B’ sample.

#### 4.1.3.3. Conclusion

It is the last but not least important component of a descriptive essay. In the conclusion, you provide a brief summary of the described aspects and end up with a final thought, which depends greatly on your writing style, imagination, and analytical skills.

*Teaching will never be easy, but the strategies or patterns that an educator uses to teach will help them to reduce these difficulties. As we have seen through this paper, dividing a class into before, during and after stages will help to achieve the class aim, and will make learning more interesting and easier for students*—Taken from Student B’ sample.

#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

Marulanda and Martínez (2018) found that, in descriptive samples, students improved sentence structure by 54%, reducing errors from 63 to 29, reflecting the impact of genre instruction and systematized assistance.

## 4.2. REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

### 4.2.1. What is a reflective essay?

A reflective essay, as the name suggests, requires insightful analysis on behalf of the writer. In other words, reflective writing is meant to encourage you to reveal your personal thoughts about your life experiences in relation to the content you are writing. In this genre, you have the opportunity to thoroughly show how you have changed or grown based on the situations at hand.



**NOTE:** Always remember that there is no absolute right or wrong way with reflective essays, but the key questions in reflective writing are “how?” and “why?”

#### **4.2.2. What type of language should I use?**

When you write a reflective paper, the reader will expect to learn about your personal experience, feelings, ideas and opinions. In contrast to other genres, in a reflective paper, you can write in the first person (I, my, me). In any kind of text, it is paramount to use the correct tense. For this reason, you need to remember the following: (1) for explaining a theory or model, you need to use present tense; (2) when addressing events, you should use past tense.

**NOTE:** Remember that the structure of your essay does not only depend on the components, but also on the language and vocabulary you use.

##### **1. Use phrases to connect your ideas such as:**

- My experience with this leads me to believe/think/question...
- For me, this assertion is very difficult to agree with...
- Based on my personal beliefs and experiences...
- It had not occurred to me that

These phrases will help the reader identify your position and your essay will have an organized structure.

##### **2. Use connectors of addition**

We recommend you to use connectors of addition such as “moreover”, “in addition” or “furthermore”, etc. By using these connectors, the reading of your essay will be smooth, and your ideas will not sound off or lost in the paragraph.

**RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!**

It is important to highlight that discourse represents an area of difficulty for emerging bilinguals as demonstrated by the data obtained in Marulanda and Martínez (2018). Despite ongoing tutoring, students showed little improvement in this writing feature which warrants more attention in instructional processes and continuous assistance.

Although the overall decrease of errors in reflective written samples was 73.4%, discourse issues did not improve significantly after six months of instructional and peer support. This invites to a reinforced instruction of discursive features of written texts.

Vocabulary, on the other hand, showed a remarkable improvement as students' written samples displayed an error decrease of 79.2%, going from 77 to 16 mistakes.

**4.2.3. How should I structure my essay?**

Similar to the descriptive essay, this paper has one introduction, a few body paragraphs and a conclusion. Always keep in mind that the number of body paragraphs mainly depends on your professor's request or on your preference. Let's explore the features that characterize each one of the parts of this written product.

**NOTE:** If you are writing about college matters, remember to always have theory, authors, and publication dates to help you interpret and develop your thoughts.

**4.2.3.1. Introduction:**

This is the beginning of your text, but it does not mean you have to write it first. In fact, many writers prefer to write the rest of the essay, and then come back to write the introduction; you can do it as well, it is up to you.

It is recommended to start by contextualizing the situation you will be analyzing. In order to do so, you can add theory that is relatable to your ideas; this will not only provide the reader with a context, but also the theoretical foundations of your paper will be solid, and your reflection will show authenticity. As a last detail, it is necessary to include a thesis statement that will tell your audience what they are to read in the rest of your paper.

**NOTE:** Your thesis statement can be either blue print or general. If it is blue print, use a parallel structure. (See chapter 6)

*In our field, observation is a significant experience since it provides different and new strategies, methodologies, and activities that can be implemented in our future classes. When I was told that I was going to observe a class, I knew I was going to learn a lot from that experience; I was not wrong. I could acquire new knowledge that was going to help me develop as professional–Taken from Student B' sample.*

#### 4.2.3.2. Body paragraphs

Before you start writing, it is very important for you to keep in mind that the best you can do is to develop one idea per paragraph. Do not try to add many ideas to the same paragraph because neither your essay will flow logical nor your information will be enough to support each idea. First, write a topic sentence that highlights the main thought you will develop. Secondly, start adding the supporting details to expand your main point and once you think your idea is well explained, we recommend you exemplify it with a situation that carefully shows evidence of your previous statements. Keep in mind that it is not mandatory to write a closing sentence as you can finish your paragraphs when you feel you have provided enough explanations.

*The experience was enriching not only for the students that experienced the lesson, but also for me that observed it first-hand. Since I learned more about class management and lesson planning, I will be able to apply that new knowledge when I exercise my profession. Also, this experience will help me develop my professional growth. Now I know the importance of being interactive while teaching. The new knowledge I acquired will be applied in my career by using teaching strategies in my lesson planning such as dividing the class in several stages. Lastly, I will try to integrate the four skills in each lesson by coming up with activities that require the activation of more than one skill in each section of the class. – Taken from Student B' sample.*

**NOTE:** Try to set a pattern for the length of your paragraphs.

### 4.2.3.3. Conclusion

The first step, and maybe the most difficult, is to write one or two sentences that cover all the ideas you have expressed throughout your essay. Since reflecting upon a determined topic may involve negative and positive thoughts, we encourage you to give one or two recommendations for future similar situations.

*Even though the class was not perfect, I strongly believe that it was really beneficial for the students, and also for me because I learned more about class management and activities design that maintain the students' motivation. This was done with a great variety of attention-getting materials that not only entertain, but also promote the learning of language through content and learning of content through language* –Taken from Student B' sample.

**NOTE:** Conclusions are shorter than the rest of the paragraphs.

### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

After analyzing reflective samples, Marulanda and Martínez (2018) noticed improved construction of sentences evidenced by a decrease of syntactic errors in 59%, which is very significant given the complexity of this genre.

## 4.3. ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

### 4.3.1. What is an argumentative essay?

The argumentative essay, apart from being one of the most challenging academic genres, is a type of text that requires you to investigate a topic, collect, generate, and evaluate evidence. Once all the information is ready, the next task is to establish a position on the topic in a concise manner; the position plays a vital role since it is what you will defend and support in each paragraph.

**NOTE:** Before starting to write, do research on the issue at hand as it will be your ally to support your position. As you will use research to construct your essay, remember to check the APA rules to cite sources and use quotes properly.

### 4.3.2. What language should I use?

Use clear and logical transitions between the introduction, body, and conclusion. Transitions are one of the main ingredients that hold the basis of the essay. Without a logical progression of thought, the reader will be unable to follow the essay's arguments, and the structure will appear fragmented. Transitions should serve to wrap up ideas and to introduce the following sections. Hence, we suggest you use the following connectors, but you can always look for other ones:

**NOTE:** The introduction of the paragraphs must not necessarily include connectors or transitional words.

#### 1. *When pointing out opposing arguments:*

- Opponents of this idea claim/maintain that...
- Those who disagree/ are against these ideas may say/ assert that...
- Some people may disagree with this idea,
- Some people may say that...however...

#### 2. *Reaching the turning point:*

- However
- But
- On the other hand

Also, remember to use connectors of addition, contrast, and sequence, so you will be able to play with your arguments while strengthening your position.

**NOTE:** In this web site "*MyEnglishTeacher.eu*", you will be able to find a long list of all types of connectors and their respective uses.

### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

For argumentative written products, Marulanda and Martínez (2018) registered an improvement in vocabulary use where errors decreased from 98 to 37 (62.3%) after students had received instruction and attended tutoring sessions.

### 4.3.3. How should I structure my essay?

Even though the last two genres had similar structures, argumentative essays include one more paragraph which is called refutation paragraph. Anyone who is defending his position might need to show the opposite side as a way to prove that his viewpoint is the best option. To sum up, your essay can have one introduction, two or three body paragraphs, one refutation paragraph including a counter argument, and a conclusion.

**NOTE:** Remember that the number of paragraphs normally depends on your assignment requirements, audience, etc.

#### 4.3.3.1. Introduction:

In the first paragraph of an argumentative essay, you should set the context by reviewing the topic in a general way. It is necessary to explain why the topic is important, or why readers should care about the issue. Then, you should present the thesis statement in a sentence that shows your position effectively. At this point, you may decide if you want to include the topic of each paragraph, or if you want to use a general idea.

*This century requires new ways to facilitate knowledge in the classroom. There are some students who opt to have open discussions, while others prefer to have lectures in their lessons. In my opinion, classes where both professors and students participate are the best option in view of the fact that learners can raise their critical thinking skills and contribute to the learning process –Taken from Student B' sample.*

#### 4.3.3.2. Body Paragraphs

Each paragraph should be limited to support the aspects that make your text's position the best option. To start with, you need to write a topic sentence stating the first point that supports your essay's position. This will give clarity and direction throughout the essay. It is important to note that each paragraph in the body of the essay must have some logical connection to the thesis statement found in the opening paragraph. Therefore, each paragraph must directly support the thesis statement with information collected during research. It is also important to explain how and why the evidence supports the thesis statement, so you will be able to convince your reader easily.

*Classes with open discussions are the most appropriate ones since they foster students' critical thinking skills. For instance, if a learner has never expressed his viewpoints, he will be restricted to other opinions and alternatives to solve an academic issue in the classroom. Moreover, critical thinking is one of the 21st century skills to be developed in classes. Students should try to use their higher-order-thinking skills that contribute with the construction on knowledge* –Taken from Student B' sample.

#### 4.3.3.3. Refutation Paragraph

Even though argumentative essays should only hold one viewpoint, we definitely encourage you to consider and explain at least one opposite point of view regarding the topic.

Depending on the length of the assignment, you should devote one or two paragraphs of the essay to discuss conflicting opinions on the topic. Rather than explaining how these differing opinions are wrong outright, you should note how opinions that do not align with your position might not be well informed or might be out of date.

*Many brands might say that “beautiful” women in publicity empower the female public to do different activities such as new hobbies or sports as well as using different clothes. Despite this fact, according to Peterson and Kerin (1977) most of those advertisements show the “perfect prototype” of a woman with a “perfect face” plus a “perfect body”, creating false stereotypes between women who do not count with those characteristics; instead, they should promote new habits or clothe tendencies. Moreover, a big group of advertisers tend to highlight the feminine side of women to encourage ladies to be more delicate and gentler. Nevertheless, that practice only limits women to follow a specific behavior. Even worse, it promotes the violation of one of the most important rights of human beings, the freedom of expression and personality. Besides, although publicists try to illustrate women as multitasking people in ad shows where they are taking care of a baby, cleaning the house and cooking, they are not only giving women an unjust role, but also making them be afraid to choose other profession in society* –Taken from Student B' sample.

**NOTE:** The argumentative essay requires well-researched, accurate, detailed, and current information to support the thesis statement and consider other points of view.

#### 4.3.3.4. Conclusion

It is at this point of the essay that students may begin to struggle. This is the portion of the essay that will leave the most immediate impression on the readers' mind. Therefore, it must be effective, logical and powerful. Do not introduce any new information into the conclusion; rather, synthesize the information presented in the body of the essay. Restate why the topic is important, review the main points, and review your thesis. You may also want to include a short suggestion for more research that should be completed in light of your work.

*To summarize, women in advertisements are the worst way marketers could have invented to sell any kind of products. The inadequate vision of women as a marketing technique is promoted by this practice, making of females a sale warranty. Besides, a wrong conception of women is being created, so many physical, sexual, and behavioral characteristics shown in ads are classifying women. On top of that, women are holding unfair roles in society due to the dirty game announcements play with each woman's image. After knowing all of this, do you really think that women in advertisements are the best way to sell a product? –Taken from Student B' sample.*

#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

From the data analysis of argumentative essays, 73 syntactic errors found before systematized assistance decreased by 66% (only 25 errors were identified afterwards).

### 4.4. EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

#### 4.4.1. What is an expository essay?

The purpose of the expository essay is to explain a topic in a logical and straightforward manner. These essays present a fair and balanced exposition of a subject based on facts. This academic writing genre can be structured around comparison and contrast, cause and effect, definitions, and examples.

#### 4.4.2. What type of language should I use?

1. Since an expository composition discusses an event, situation, or others' viewpoints, and not a personal experience, you should write in the third person ("he," "she," or "it"), and avoid "I" or "you" sentences.



2. Based on the structure of your essay (cause and effect/comparison), you need to use the proper connecting words or phrases such as:

Connectors of cause and effect	Connectors or comparison:
As a result	Likewise
Consequently	Similarly
As a consequence	In the same way
Inevitably	
Connectors of contrast	Example phrases
As a striking difference	By all means
As opposed to	To shed light on
Contrary to	To emphasize

**NOTE:** Even though most of the time you will write about academic matters, try to select straightforward language that is easy for the reader to understand.

#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

Marulanda and Martínez (2018) observed that, in expository samples, students' errors decreased by 73.4%, going down from 60 to 16 mistakes.

#### 4.4.3. How should I structure my essay?

A common formula for writing an expository essay is the five-paragraph pattern, which is the same structure we have seen in the previous genres. This is, however, by no means the only way for writing such essays. Nonetheless, their sentences may vary based on the type of expository essay you are writing. Therefore, you must be careful as to what information you are including, and how you are doing it.

##### 4.4.3.1. Introduction

The most important sentence in the introductory paragraph is the topic sentence, which states the main subject of the whole essay. Also, we recommend you provide an essay's overview that contains a preview of each aspect that will be addressed throughout the text. Finally, include a clearly developed thesis statement without giving an opinion or taking a position. A good thesis is well defined, with a manageable scope that can be adequately addressed within a five-paragraph essay.

**EXAMPLE**

It is now a fashion in developed countries to be a vegan. With all the mistreatment of animals in factories and farms, animal hunting, and all the chemicals injected into animals raised as future food, countless people have chosen to be vegans. What exactly is a vegan? A vegan is an individual who chooses to not use or consume animal products in regard to food, clothing, and other uses based on principles, health, and the environment—*Nicholas Klacsanzky*.

**4.4.3.2. Body Paragraphs**

Each paragraph should open with a topic sentence indicating what the paragraph will be about. The following sentences should further illuminate this main idea through discussion and/or explanation. We encourage you to use evidence and examples here, remember to keep it factual. This way, the reader will consider your essay as a reliable source. Remember to always explain how the examples you are giving support the main idea of your paragraph. Once you have developed your idea, you can wrap up the paragraph with a sentence that generally restates the details you have given.

**EXAMPLE**

First, we can provide a brief history of veganism. Time magazine explains that, "...though the term was coined in 1944, the concept of flesh-avoidance can be traced back to ancient Indian and eastern Mediterranean societies. Vegetarianism is first mentioned by the Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras of Samos around 500 BCE. In addition to his theorem about right triangles, Pythagoras promoted benevolence among all species, including humans. Followers of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism also advocated vegetarianism, believing that humans should not inflict pain on other animals" (Suddath, Claire). Vegetarianism originally caught on in the West through the religious sect The Ephrata Cloister in 1732 in Pennsylvania, but it was not until 1944 when Britisher Donald Watson created the term "vegan" for people who are vegetarians that also do not eat eggs and dairy products. Watson could not have foreseen the impact his new term would have in the future—*Nicholas Klacsanzky*.

**4.4.3.3. Conclusion:**

The conclusion neatly closes the text by summarizing the information through restating the main ideas in a unique way. In fact, make sure not to include new or further information since it can divert readers' viewpoints.

**EXAMPLE**

Though veganism is popular nowadays, it began as a religious and eventually mundane practice. However, currently, veganism is connected to the philosophy of being harmonious with other animals (we are animals too, according to science) and not wanting to cause them harm in any form—whether it be through food processing, clothing, and the products we use. Veganism is promoted as a health and environmental solution to many issues. Therefore, it should not be discounted as only a fad. –*Nicholas Klacsanzky*.

**RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!**

Expository samples, according to Marulanda and Martínez (2018), showed 48 sentence structure errors before tutoring, which were reduced to 13 mistakes after peer assistance (73%)





# 5.

## ERROR ANALYSIS: WHY DO WE MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES?

In this chapter, you will find...

**English language learners' most common errors identified in samples of  
different genres and several features**



In the previous chapters, you learned about the WPA and the Genre-based Approach. However, in chapter five, you will increase your metalinguistic awareness about specific aspects of language such as discourse, organization, syntax, conventions, and vocabulary. If you want to improve your writing, you must know the mistakes you make and correct them. It is very common to see students making mistakes when writing, especially if the writing task is complex. Nonetheless, mistakes are part of the learning process and can be corrected after you read the text two or three times. On the other hand, when these mistakes constantly appear in different texts, they become errors which, different from mistakes, represent a problem in students' writing performance (Brown, 1994; Londoño, 2008).

### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!

An important finding in Marulanda and Martínez (2018) is that conventions represented the highest percentage of errors in the pre and post phases of the study. Conventions include grammar, punctuation, and spelling; even though punctuation is a transferable skill, students' written samples did not evidence positive transferability. This calls for attention to develop a solid foundation in students' writing skills in Spanish. The other two areas displaying errors, grammar and spelling, can be understood due to the L1 negative transferability to English (See Table 1).

	Discourse	Organization	Syntax	Conventions	Vocabulary	Total
Descriptive	20	1	63	90	97	274
Reflective	3	1	39	76	77	196
Argumentative	3	5	73	108	98	287
Expository	9	1	48	66	60	184
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>941</b>

*Table 1. Number of errors BEFORE tutoring*

	Discourse	Organization	Syntax	Conventions	Vocabulary	Total
Descriptive	21	1	29	28	26	115
Reflective	2	1	16	17	16	52
Argumentative	1	0	25	36	37	99
Expository	2	0	13	22	16	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>319</b>

*Table 2. Number of errors AFTER tutoring*

Out of the sixteen written samples that were analyzed, 941 errors were identified before systematized assistance. After ongoing support was provided, written samples' errors decreased by 66% (319).

Four academic writing genres were studied in the project as seen in tables 1 and 2. As the academic term started, 274 errors were identified in the descriptive samples. By the end of the semester, the total number of errors decreased to 115, representing 58% improvement in this genre. In reflective samples, errors went from 196 to 52, illustrating a 73% rate of positive change. Argumentative essays improved by 65% as evidenced in the reduction of errors (from 287 to 99). Finally, 183 errors were identified in expository products before assistance, which decreased by 71% (53 errors) once support was provided.

There were five writing features analyzed in each of the written products as seen in Tables 1 and 2. Starting with discourse, 35 errors were found prior to tutoring, decreasing by only 26% at the end of the study; this represents a striking deviation from the pattern of improvement found in the other features which calls for further research. In regard to organization, 75% of errors decreased after tutoring. In terms of syntactic errors, a reduction of 63% was evidenced as errors went from 223 to 83. Furthermore, writing features comprising language conventions (e.g. grammar, punctuation, spelling) showed a betterment of 70%, with errors decreasing from 340 to 103. Lastly, vocabulary errors occurrences went from 332 to 95, revealing a 71% increment of correct vocabulary usage.

Error analysis indicates that, through instruction, systematized feedback, and ongoing support, students' written products can improve significantly, for there is a better understanding of writing



as a cyclical and iterative process; a higher acknowledgement of the different academic genres and their demands; and an increased metalinguistic awareness that is reflected in the construction of paragraphs, sentences, and words.

This is why it is important to pay close attention to the errors that are recurrent when writing, so you can promptly prevent them in your compositions.

In Table 3, you will find a list of errors that are frequently found in EFL students' compositions based on Marulanda (2018). These errors are categorized in five different areas: conventions, vocabulary, syntax, discourse, and organization.

Conventions	Vocabulary	Syntax	Discourse	Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Subject-verb agreement</li> <li>- Misspelling</li> <li>- Wrong definite article use</li> <li>- Singular instead of plural</li> <li>- Plural instead of singular</li> <li>- Wrong preposition</li> <li>- Wrong punctuation</li> <li>- Wrong tense</li> <li>- Missing possessive</li> <li>- Wrong connector use</li> <li>- Wrong capitalization</li> <li>- Wrong indefinite article use</li> <li>- Wrong possessive use</li> <li>-Wrong collocation</li> <li>- Incorrect use of comparative</li> <li>-Uncountable instead of countable adverb</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wrong word</li> <li>- Missing word</li> <li>- Wrong form</li> <li>- Wrong prefix</li> <li>- Redundancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unclear sentence</li> <li>- L1-interference</li> <li>- Awkward sentence</li> <li>- Wrong connector</li> <li>- Word order</li> <li>- Faulty parallelism</li> <li>- Wordiness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incorrect use of information</li> <li>- Insufficient length</li> <li>- Casual language</li> <li>- Subjectivity in description</li> <li>- Reflection in description</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of cohesion</li> <li>- No paragraph division</li> </ul>

Table 3. List of commonly found errors (Marulanda, 2018).

We will also give you a short definition and some examples of each type of error, so that you can easily recognize them in your future work.

### 5.1. Conventions.

These are errors that break the conventional rules of the language in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

- **Example 1:** Feedback is beneficial for students as it helps them *strengthen* their writing skills.
- **Correction 1:** Feedback is beneficial for students as it helps them *strengthen* their writing skills.
  
- **Example 2:** I *beginned* working last summer.
- **Correction 2:** I *began* working last summer.
  
- **Example 3:** At the university level, students should have high levels of academic writing performance. *However this* skill is the most challenging for EFL learners.
- **Correction 3:** At the university level, students should have high levels of academic writing performance. *However, this* skill is the most challenging for EFL learners.
  
- **Example 4:** When a student gives his opinion about a certain topic, he is constructing knowledge; he is actively receiving plain information, but he also is finding a reason as to why new material would be useful for his learning experience. *this* way students are more likely to internalize the new knowledge.
- **Correction 4:** When a student gives his opinion about a certain topic, he is constructing knowledge; he is actively receiving plain information, but he also is finding a reason as to why new material would be useful for his learning experience. *This* way students are more likely to internalize the new knowledge.
  
- **Example 5:** Many people have **died from** Tuberculosis.
- **Correction 5:** Many people have **died of** Tuberculosis.
  
- **Example 6:** The woman was dressed **with** black.
- **Correction 6:** The woman was dressed **in** black.

E-resource: If you want to know more about English collocations, you can use this link or scan the QR code and check a list with hundreds of collocations that can be very useful.

[http://www.ugr.es/~inped/documentos/lista\\_coloc\\_freq.pdf](http://www.ugr.es/~inped/documentos/lista_coloc_freq.pdf)



## 5.2. VOCABULARY.

Errors in the use of appropriate academic lexicon.

- **Example 1:** The best movie in the world is **entitled** Spiderman.
- **Correction 1:** The best movie in the world is **titled** Spiderman.
- **Example 2:** While the word **poisonous** is used for anything that will poison you when you *ingest* (eat) it, **venomous** is used for anything that will poison you if it bites you. When writers do not know this kind of information, they can make mistakes like the following:
  - Murderers on TV show use **venom** to kill their victims.
  - **Correction 2:** Murderers on TV show use **poison** to kill their victims.
- **Example 3:** I am **boring**.
- **Correction 3:** I am **bored**.

**NOTE:** Students usually make these kinds of mistakes with false cognates, which are words in different languages that appear similar, but do not actually mean the same thing. Words such as “actually, exit, carpet, embarrassed, and idiom” are usually confused by Spanish speakers due to their similarity to Spanish words “exito, carpeta, embarazada” and “idioma”.

## 5.3. SYNTAX.

These are errors in sentence construction. Sentence fragments and incomprehensible sentences are considered syntax errors.

- **Example 1:** While watching a movie, people who text on their phones are very annoying.
- **Correction 1:** People who text on their phones while watching a movie are very annoying
- **Example 2:** Excited about her upcoming promotion, the trip home was full of singing.
- **Correction 2:** Excited about her upcoming promotion, Sandy sang all the way home.
- **Example 3:** The expositor is requested to convince the evaluation group that your research is valid and you're able to become in a teacher. (Unclear sentence)
- **Correction 3:** The presenter should not only prove his teaching skills, but also the validity of his research.
- **Example 4:** When we got in the car. We rolled down the windows. (Sentence fragment)
- **Correction 4:** When we got in the car, we rolled down the windows.

#### 5.4. DISCOURSE.

Discourse errors appear when students do not address the task purpose and audience.

- **Example 1:** Look at this thesis statement from an argumentative essay.  
Eating fast food saves time. (This thesis statement is too broad, see chapter four to know the components of an effective thesis statement).
- **Correction 1:** The popularity of fast food is spreading rapidly among many people due to the following three main reasons: good taste, convenient time, and price.

#### 5.5. ORGANIZATION.

These errors consist of supporting ideas that are developed in an awkward way or with wrong paragraph division.

*Education has suffered a lot of changes through the history in the development of the classes. Traditional classes have focused on the teacher as the center of the classroom being accepted by some students; on the other hand, some others prefer modern classes where open discussions between teachers and students are allowed. I strongly believe that classes where interaction takes place all the time is better for the learning process of the students since it develops critical thinking and socio-constructivist personalities.*

*Analyzing and reformulating information received will allow the students to acquire meaningful knowledge. If a student only remains with who he has listened to there will not be possibility to learn more about something. For example, in a history class learning about the facts occurred will not be necessarily meaningful at least the student and the professor make relations, compare and contrast or create different contexts to see what the effects would be. Furthermore, the autonomy of alumnus can be affected as well since they are not motivated or pushed to research and evaluate input. It has been proved that learners do not go further in their lessons being part of their basic learning processes such understanding and comprehending, but they are really comprehending information, or they are repeating it? Finally, personality could have development troubles. Students develop a co-dependence of their partners' ideas and do not create their own; being in this way non-authentic, lazy and pour cognitively students.*

*Taking part of interaction will help students to become more tolerant and to construct new knowledge as information is shared. In most of the cases students do not comprehend what their teachers say and when they listened to a partner explaining the same concept, their frustration is driven apart. Open discussions also convey pupils to work in groups easily. This is due to the fact that tolerance allows everybody to listen to each other and combine these different opinions. Positive aspects will be developed during the debates since they make students take different positions seeing beyond their opinion, leading them to discover and increase knowledge–Taken from student G' sample*

After receiving some feedback Student G wrote an improved version:

*Education has passed throughout a lot of changes regarding to the development of the classes along the history. Traditional classes have focused on the teacher as the center of the classroom, but nowadays, students have taken that position leading to interaction and opened discussions between them. Some learners agree with the idea of having the professor as the only mean source of knowledge while some others prefer the classes where language becomes a tool for communicating and sharing ideas. I strongly believe that professors who promote debates and conversational contributions among pupils will help them develop critical thinking and socio constructivism skills.*

*Meaningful knowledge will be acquired by students as long as they analyze and evaluate the input given in classrooms. When a student does not reflect about a specific topic, keeping in mind only what has been listened to from the professor, he will not internalize the information. For instance, during a history class, learning about the facts occurred will not be necessarily meaningful unless students and the professor make relations, compare and contrast the contexts. Furthermore, searching and evaluating information to go further in knowledge will also guide to the development of high cognitive skills. It has been proved that students who do not take information from other sources will not expand their ways of perceiving the world as well as they will be limited to interact and take positions in open discussions. Finally, giving and supporting opinions upon a specific topic in class will help learners to be authentic and autonomous. Autonomy is an important aspect in critical processes since its absence will not allow to have meaningful knowledge.*

*The active participation of students in several parts of the class will create tolerant and high-involvement learners. People are naturally social beings; however, some troubles occur when sharing ideas and listening to the others'. The promotion of expressing thoughts about a specific issue in class will help students to be more open-minded in order to construct new knowledge. In addition to this, the lack of competence among professors can create confusion among students upon the content provided. Recent researches have demonstrated that the majority of the learners comprehend and understand better when they receive partners' explanations, therefore, interacting in class could help diminish the confusion and lead to meaningful knowledge. Taking part of problems solution, refutations, reinforcements, and wonderings will guide the students to become the builders of the world. Positive aspects like respect, listening to other's points of view, making connections with everybody's conceptions will be the key for discovering new knowledge and for contributing to the evolution of the human species as a socio-constructivism being.*



# 6.

## POWERFUL HINTS TO BECOME A GREAT WRITER

In this chapter, you will find...

**Tips to keep in mind when approaching an academic writing task.**





As we have mentioned before, writing involves a series of steps, but the key to make your writing stand out is to embrace the process in a way that it reflects your own style. Besides knowing the specificities of each genre and the most common EFL students' compositional errors, it is always helpful to receive some advice from experienced writers. Thus, in this chapter, we will provide some useful tips that will help you solve some doubts about polishing your texts and reinforcing your compositional skills.

## **6.1. BRAINSTORMING VS. FREEWRTING**

Although brainstorming and freewriting can seem similar to you, they actually have some differences.

Brainstorming is an informal way of generating ideas to write about, or points to support a determined aspect on your essay. It can be done at any time during the writing process either to add information, clarify ideas or provide examples. The key issue about brainstorming is that you should simply open your mind to any thought that pops into it. During this process, you may come up with ideas that are not useful, but that is okay since brainstorming requires a selection process.

On the other hand, when you free write, you write whatever comes into your mind, and you do not pay attention to your style or any other issues like spelling, grammar, or punctuation. One of the perks of this strategy is that you allow yourself to write any kind of ideas you might not normally write when you write your text in the first attempt. In this exercise, it is recommended to set a timeline, which could be ten minutes only, and write until you reach your time goal. Once you finish, read back over the text, so you will be able to select what is useful or not.

## **6.2. WHAT IS AN OUTLINE?**

Once you have chosen a topic and gathered some ideas, we recommend you to construct an outline where your thoughts will start to shape up. An outline allows you to plan what you will write in the following paragraphs, so make sure you include enough information to correctly complete your writing task. In fact, an outline will also help you write smoothly so that you do not stop writing due to lack of ideas. This is the template of an outline already filled that you can modify for your essay.

**EXAMPLE****Outline Template****I. Introduction**

- A. **Current Problem:** Educational attainment rates are decreasing in the United States while healthcare costs are increasing.
- B. **Population/Area of Focus:** Unskilled or low-skilled adult workers
- C. **Key Terms:** healthy, well-educated

**Thesis Statement:** Because of their income deficit and general susceptibility to depression, students who drop out of high school before graduation maintain a higher risk for physical and mental health problems later in life.

**II. Background**

- A. **Historical Employment Overview:** Unskilled laborers in the past were frequently unionized and adequately compensated for their work.
- B. **Historical Healthcare Overview:** Unskilled laborers in the past were often provided adequate healthcare and benefits.
- C. **Current Link between Education and Employment Type:** Increasingly, uneducated workers work in unskilled or low-skilled jobs .
- D. **Gaps in the Research:** Little information exists exploring the health implications of the current conditions in low-skilled jobs.
- III **Major Point 1:** Conditions of employment affect workers' physical health.
  - A. **Minor Point 1:** Unskilled work environments are correlated highly with worker injury.
  - B. **Minor Point 2:** Unskilled work environments rarely provide healthcare or adequate injury recovery time).
- IV. **Major Point 2:** Conditions of employment affect workers' mental health
  - A. **Minor Point 1:** Employment in a low-skilled position is highly correlated with dangerous levels of stress.
  - B. **Minor Point 2:** Stress is highly correlated with mental health issues.
- V. **Major Point 3:** Physical health and mental health correlate directly with one another.
  - A. **Minor Point 1:** Mental health problems and physical health problems are highly correlated.
  - B. **Minor Point 2:** Stress manifests itself in physical form
- VI. **Major Point 4:** People with more financial worries have more stress and worse physical health.
  - A. **Minor Point 1:** Many high-school dropouts face financial problems.
  - B. **Minor Point 2:** Financial problems are often correlated with unhealthy lifestyle choices such poor food choices, overconsumption/abuse of alcohol, chain smoking, abusive relationships, etc..

**VII. Conclusion**

- A. **Restatement of Thesis:** Students who drop out of high school are at a higher risk for both mental and physical health problems throughout their lives.
- B. **Next Steps:** Society needs educational advocates; educators need to be aware of this situation and strive for student retention in order to promote healthy lifestyles and warn students of the risks associated with dropping out of school.

–Taken from Walden University.

### 6.3. WHERE CAN I LOOK FOR RELIABLE SOURCES?

Sometimes, we need some sources we can use to support our arguments, but we do not know where to find reliable information with complete articles. Indeed, there are a lot of databases where you can look for journals that offer this type of studies about any topic. Google Scholar is one of the most common search engines with little or no cost.

E-resource: You can either scan the QR code with your cellphone or type the link below:

[https://www.scribendi.com/advice/free\\_online\\_journal\\_and\\_research\\_databases.en.html](https://www.scribendi.com/advice/free_online_journal_and_research_databases.en.html)

Here, you will find 101 free databases with their respective foci, so you can choose easily the one that best works for you.



### 6.4. HOW SHOULD I RESPOND WHEN I RECEIVE FEEDBACK?

In chapter three, we explained all the stages that compose the Process Approach and how they contribute to your writing competence development, including feedback. Nonetheless, you may think that receiving constructive criticism from someone can be a bit uncomfortable since you are unsure how to react to comments about your work. Indeed, one of the aspects that influences the effectiveness of feedback is how you interpret the corrections. We recommend you to value what you did well whenever your teacher, tutor or partner remark positive features of your text, but it is also important for you to pay close attention to the elements that need improvement. What you need to improve will never be a failure, instead, it should be a motivation to write better every day.

### 6.5. WHAT IS A HOOK?

Essay hooks are one or two sentences placed at the beginning of the introduction, and they are meant to engage the readers with the text. Depending on the effectiveness of the hook, the reader will decide if he wants to continue reading the essay or not (Hansky, 2016). Almost every writer uses hooks not only to maintain the readers' attention on the text, but also to give more power to their words. Writing good college essay hooks can be a demanding task, this is why we suggest you plan what you want to say before start writing it.

**EXAMPLE:**

“While most coffee enthusiasts would tell you that their favorite drink comes from a bean, they would be wrong. Coffee is actually made from a seed that is simply called a bean” –*Taken from Bid 4 Papers.*

**6.6. WHAT IS A THESIS STATEMENT?**

The thesis statement is the sentence where you state the purpose and the controlling idea of your essay. The difference between a thesis statement and a topic sentence is that in the thesis statement you actually take a position, and not only introduce the topic. A well-constructed thesis statement always reminds you of what you need to write in the body paragraphs and effectively provides the reader with the essay’s preview. In order to make your thesis statement stronger, we recommend you to include points that are firmly connected to the topic at hand, so the reader will consider your essay as a reliable and assertive text.

There are two common types of thesis statements:

**6.6.1. Blue print thesis statement**

A blue print thesis statement shows the topics you will be talking about in each one of the paragraphs in their respective order.

*Despite the fact that a structure for Task-Based Language Teaching is already set, in this paper we will explain the adaptations we did to make it more appropriate for the context as well as the strengths and challenges we found throughout the process*–Taken from student H’ sample.

**6.6.2. General thesis statement**

On the other hand, a general thesis statement only includes a general idea of what you will be talking about throughout the essay.

*Homeless people in Berkeley should be given access to services -such as regular food donations, public, and camping facilities -because it would improve life for all inhabitants of the city*–Taken from student I’ sample.

## **6.7. HOW LONG SHOULD MY PARAGRAPHS BE?**

Typically, an average paragraph is from 12 to 15 lines long, which corresponds to the model that is often taught. Based on the type paragraph you are writing, the sentences that might be included are a topic sentence, a number of supporting details, and a final thought. The number of sentences between the topic sentence and the conclusion cannot be objectively determined since there are no strict rules about how many words or lines your paragraphs should have; this actually depends on the requirements of your writing task. For this reason, we recommend you to stop writing once you consider your ideas have developed and supported your text effectively.

## **6.8. ALWAYS CHECK APA**

Nowadays, there are numerous sets of rules that standardize the organization, citations and references of your academic tasks. APA, for instance, has become one of the most commonly used ones. When you write any assignment, it is essential to check the APA rules in order to correctly organize, cite and reference your text. For this reason, we will give you a link and a QR code to access the last APA guide (sixth edition) <http://normasapa.net/2017-edicion-6/>. Remember to always check for the last edition of APA as these rules are constantly changing.



## **6.9. POLISH YOUR PUNCTUATION**

One of the most challenging aspects we need to learn when writing is punctuation. Since there are many rules and variations, we tend to forget several of the most basic norms. Once you scan this QR code or type this link <https://www.thepunctuationguide.com/index.html>, you will be redirected to a complete online punctuation guide where there are tips of punctuation and all the rules corresponding to each of its symbols.



## 6.10. HOW TO PROOFREAD YOUR TEXT

Proofreading refers to the process of checking your text in order to detect and correct all the spelling errors and typos that may have occurred during the writing process. Proofreading should be performed before uploading or submitting your work. Here are some tips:

- **Revise the completion of the task.**

Do not try to correct sentence issues before making sure that your written composition meets all the task requirements regarding the number of paragraphs and their organization.

- **Take a break.**

Only five minutes without looking at your text will refresh your brain and will help you find your mistakes easily in terms of spelling, grammar and/or punctuation.

- **Look for wordy sentences and modify them.**

Read all your text and try to identify sentences with more words than needed, so you can change or delete them, and have clear and concise sentences.

- **Read out loud.**

This exercise works to identify awkward sentences or wrong punctuation use. When you read out loud, you will be able to be in your readers' shoes and see what is understandable and what is not.

- **Ask someone to read your paper**

Sometimes, when you read and read your own text, you are not able to recognize minor errors such as spelling or wrong words. Given this fact, it is recommended to have someone read your work and identify what you could not.

*–Taken from The Writing Center- University of Wisconsin-Madison*

## 6.11. HOW TO OVERCOME WRITERS' BLOCKING

If you think you are the only one who feels blocked while writing, you are not alone. In fact, writers constantly fight against this issue and look for ways to overcome it. Here are some suggestions:

- **Spend time doing other activities**

When you are uncertain about what to write, your brain tends to shut down under the pressure to generate elaborate a written piece. Therefore, we recommend you to spend some time doing activities you like, either alone or with company; it will refresh your mind, and you will feel better to write again.

- **Read other sources of information**

If you have written similar texts before, you can use them as references to remember to get inspired or to avoid making the same mistakes.

- **Write other sections of the text**

In some cases, you do not know what to write because there is a text section that has specific features. We suggest you continue writing other paragraphs if possible; this way, you will use your time wisely and can later come back to write the missing part.

- **Eat something you really like**

Eating something you love can be a very good stimulus when you have writer's blocking. It will help you release all your stress and gain some energy to continue writing.

- **Set time frames**

Generally, if you do not know what to write, it is because you are overwhelmed with many ideas on your mind. We recommend you to set a time frame for each one of the aspects you need to write about, so after that, you will be able to focus on one thing at a time, and your thoughts will continue to flow.







# 7.

## FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: ENLIGHTENING CHECKPOINTS

In this chapter, you will find...

**Genre-based analytical rubrics to provide students with formative feedback throughout their writing process.**



Different from the previous chapters, which were focused on providing students with methodologies and approaches to improve their academic writing skills in English, this chapter is designed for educators who are interested in effective and time-efficient writing assessment practices. In this case, we suggest the use of analytical rubrics to assess descriptive, reflective, argumentative, and expository essays. *(For further information about rubrics and formative assessment check: 'How to Create and Use Rubrics for Formative Assessment and Grading' by Brookhart, 2013).*

Analytical rubrics focus on one aspect of the criteria at a time, allowing teachers to carefully review each of the tasks' features. Below you will find task-specific rubrics used to evaluate specific genres and their elements.

## 7.1 RUBRIC FOR DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

	Comments	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Introduction:</b> - <b>Hook:</b> engages the reader with the hook. (1) - <b>Context:</b> background information contextualizes the reader. (2) - <b>Thesis statement:</b> states the topics that will be addressed in the next paragraphs. (2)						
<b>Body Paragraphs:</b> - <b>Topic sentence:</b> introduces the topic of the paragraph. (1) - <b>Description:</b> describes the subject/object and provides examples to support the description. (3) - <b>Transition sentence:</b> closes the paragraph and introduces the next paragraph. (1)						
<b>Conclusion:</b> summarizes the description main points. (3) - <b>Final thought:</b> contributes to the essay's objective. (2)						
<b>Voice:</b> audience and genre awareness are evidenced throughout the essay. (3) - Detailed description.(2)						
<b>Organization:</b> displays the main ideas in a coherent and cohesive way. (2) - Format assists readers orientation (1) - Transitions are smooth and varied (1) - Sentences are soundly constructed. (1)						
<b>Language:</b> - Vocabulary reflects precision and accuracy. (3) - Repetition is rarely present. (2)						
<b>Conventions:</b> - <b>Capitalization:</b> accurate for sentence beginnings, proper names, titles. (1) - <b>Punctuation:</b> end punctuation, commas in series. (2) - <b>Spelling:</b> complex words are spelled accurately. (1) - <b>Grammar:</b> accurate grammar (1)						
<b>APA Rules</b> - Appropriate formatting rules. (1) - Appropriate referencing and citations. (3) - Indentation at the beginning of new paragraphs. (1)						

## 7.2. RUBRIC FOR REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

	Comments	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Introduction:</b> - <b>Context:</b> background information contextualizes the reader. (2) - <b>Thesis statement:</b> clearly states the topics that will be addressed in the next paragraphs. (3)						
<b>Body Paragraphs:</b> - <b>Topic sentence:</b> introduces the topic of the paragraph. (2) - <b>Supporting details:</b> expands the main points of the paragraph and supports with examples and/or theory. (3)						
<b>Conclusion:</b> summarizes the main ideas of the essay. (3) - <b>Final thought:</b> proposes a contribution for future similar situations. (2)						
<b>Voice:</b> audience and genre awareness are evidenced throughout the essay. (3) - Insightful reflection (1) - <b>Metacognitive skills:</b> reflective thinking is evidenced. (1)						
<b>Organization:</b> displays the main ideas in a coherent and cohesive way. (2) - Format assists readers' orientation. (1) - Transitions are smooth and varied. (1) - Sentences are soundly constructed. (1)						
<b>Language:</b> - Vocabulary is accurate. (3) - Repetition is rarely present. (2)						
<b>Conventions:</b> - <b>Capitalization:</b> accurate for sentence beginnings, proper names, titles. (1) - <b>Punctuation:</b> end punctuation, commas in series. (2) - <b>Spelling:</b> complex words are spelled accurately. (1) - <b>Grammar:</b> accurate grammar (1)						

### 7.3. RUBRIC FOR ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

	Comments	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Introduction:</b> - <b>Hook:</b> engages the reader with the hook. (1) - <b>Context:</b> reviews the topic in a general way. - shows the importance of the topic. (2) - <b>Thesis statement:</b> states the position and addresses the key aspects of the next paragraphs. (2)						
<b>Body Paragraphs:</b> - <b>Topic sentence:</b> introduces the supporting detail of the paragraph. (1) - Theoretical support or examples are presented in the paragraph. (2) - <b>Supporting ideas:</b> explains why and how the evidence provided supports the thesis statement. (2)						-
<b>Counter arguments:</b> shows how and why others' positions are against the author's one. (3) <b>Refutation points:</b> explains why the other viewpoints are not sound. (2)						
<b>Conclusion:</b> restates why the topic is important, reviews the main points, and reviews the thesis statement. (5)						
<b>Voice:</b> audience awareness is evidenced throughout the essay. (3) - Clear arguments (2)						
<b>Organization:</b> displays the main ideas in a coherent and cohesive way. (2) - Format assists readers orientation (1) - Transitions are smooth and varied (1) - Sentences are soundly constructed. (1)						
<b>Language:</b> - Vocabulary is accurate. (3) - Repetition is rarely present. (2)						
<b>Conventions:</b> - <b>Capitalization:</b> accurate for sentence beginnings, proper names, titles. (1) - <b>Punctuation:</b> end punctuation, commas in series. (2) - <b>Spelling:</b> complex words are spelled accurately. (1) - <b>Grammar:</b> accurate grammar (1)						
<b>APA Rules</b> - Appropriate formatting rules. (1) - Appropriate referencing and citations. (3) - Indentation at the beginning of new paragraphs. (1)						

## 7.4. RUBRIC FOR EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

	Comments	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Introduction:</b> - <b>Context:</b> reviews the topic in a general way. (2) - <b>Thesis statement:</b> the thesis statement is defined, and does not give an opinion or take a position. (3)						
<b>Body Paragraphs:</b> - <b>Topic sentence:</b> introduces the topic of the paragraph. (1) - Factual evidence or examples are presented in the paragraph. (3) - <b>Transition sentence:</b> a sentence that generally names the details of the paragraph is provided. (1)						
<b>Conclusion:</b> restates the main points, and review the thesis statement. (5)						
<b>Voice:</b> audience awareness is evidenced throughout the essay. (3) - Precise description evidence. (2)						
<b>Organization:</b> displays the main ideas in a coherent and cohesive way. (2) - Format assists readers orientation (1) - Transitions are smooth and varied (1) - Sentences are soundly constructed (1).						
<b>Language:</b> - Vocabulary is accurate. (3) - Repetition is rarely present (2).						
<b>Conventions:</b> - <b>Capitalization:</b> accurate for sentence beginnings, proper names, titles. (1) - <b>Punctuation:</b> end punctuation, commas in series (2). - <b>Spelling:</b> complex words are spelled accurately. (1) - <b>Grammar:</b> accurate grammar (1)						
<b>APA Rules</b> - Appropriate formatting rules. (1) - Appropriate referencing and citations. (3) - Indentation at the beginning of new paragraphs. (1)						

**RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS!**

A carefully structured assessment procedure fosters more meaningful feedback as found by Marulanda and Martínez (2018), whose participants asserted that the comments and corrections they received not only helped them increase the awareness of the steps that comprise the compositional process, but also benefited them in the way they structured, organized, proofread and edited their texts. In other words, better assessment makes better writers.





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## Disclaimer:

The students' samples were taken from the compositional tasks written in the first semester of 2018 in an Academic Writing course of an English Teaching Program. They authorized the use of these samples in this handbook by signing a consent form where it was explicitly explained the purpose of their written products.



## APPENDIXES

In this chapter, you will find...

**Correcting symbols and essays to practice providing feedback to students' written products.**



In this section, we will provide you with two students' essays in order to look for their errors and try to mark them with the proper correcting symbols. You can find a list of symbols at the end of the appendix. This exercise will help you develop your feedback skills as you will be able to reinforce your error identification abilities.

## FIRST SAMPLE

### Topic: Lectures vs. Open discussions - Opinion Essay

Current education requires several ways to test students' knowledge; for instance, we can find lectures and discussions between the most common activities. I would rather prefer the discussions before the lectures, due to the fact that you can only show your knowledge when you face the stress to explore your ideas. Discussions are an outstanding tool since they demand a high level of expertise and emotional factor.

The expertise is based on the knowledge and the experience, in a discussions you should be requested to explain and convince the audience about your ideas; therefore, there are not a better way to test the knowledge than showing the ideas with the public. A remarkable example of this is the discussion of the research to finish the career in that situation, the expositor is requested to convince the evaluation group that your research is valid, and you are able to become in a teacher.

The emotional factor is an important aspect to take into account in a discussion, for the self-control, the non-verbal communication and the audience management. These factors cannot be evaluated with lectures and its importance is reflected in the fact that recent studies have shown that only the 10% of communication is verbal and the remaining 90% is non-verbal; Hence, discussions are the only tools which can help us to show the knowledge.

## SECOND SAMPLE

### Topic: Organic food - Integrated task TOEFL

In the passage, the author stated that nowadays there are a lot of concerns about traditional grown products. He said that this problem appears due to the use of chemicals on crops, causing people to prefer organic food. However, the lecturer exposed that organic food and traditional grown are most likely the same inasmuch as the chemicals do not affect our health.

The author claimed, contrary to the speaker, that traditional farming and chemicals causes not only real harm for our health, but the environment. He also stated that these chemicals produce water pollution, exposing animals to poison. Even though the author stated all the problems about traditional farming, the lecturer said that these chemicals are harmless for humans and animals. He affirms that vegetables and fruits have a tiny amount of pesticides that can be easily removed.

Besides, the lecturer exposed that if a farmer uses a harmful chemical for people and environment, he will receive a penalty. For this reason, he states that it is healthy and safe to eat these traditionally grown products since they are far from being bad for human consume.



## CORRECTING SYMBOLS

Symbol	Meaning	Incorrect	Correct
P	Punctuation	I live work, and go to school in Walnut.	I live, work, and go to school in Walnut.
=	Capitalization Needed	The <u>do</u> dgers play in <u>los</u> <u>angeles</u> .	The Dodgers play in Los Angeles.
VT	Verb Tense	I never <sup>VT</sup> work as a cashier until I got a job there.	I never worked as a cashier until I got a job there.
SV	Subject-verb Agreement	The manager <sup>SV</sup> work hard.	The manager works hard. * This is just one correct tense that can be used. Depending on the time of the action, conjugate accordingly.
TS	Tense Shift	After I went to the store, I <sup>TS</sup> eat the ice cream I brought.	After I went to the store, I ate the ice cream I brought.
◇	Close Space	Every <sup>◇</sup> one works hard.	Everyone works hard.
#	Space Needed	Going <sup>#</sup> to class is awesome.	Going to class is awesome.
SP	Spelling	The <sup>SP</sup> maneger is a woman.	The manager is a woman.
?L	Plural	<sup>PL</sup> Apple are the most nutritious fruit.	Apples are the most nutritious fruit.
Ø	Unnecessary Word	The student <del>she</del> studies all the time.	The student studies all the time.
O	Missing Word	Please don't <sup>O</sup> me that question anymore.	Please don't ask me that question anymore.
WF	Wrong Word Form	Her voice is <sup>WF</sup> delighted.	Her voice is delightful.
WW	Wrong Word	The food is delicious. <sup>WW</sup> Besides, the restaurant is always crowded.	The food is delicious. Therefore, the restaurant is always crowded.
∩	Wrong Word Order	Friday <sup>∩</sup> (always is) our busiest day.	Friday is always our busiest day.

PR	Pronoun Reference Error	The restaurant's speciality is fish. <u>They</u> are always fresh. PR	The restaurant's speciality is fish. It is always fresh.
RO	Run-on (Fused Sentence)	Lily is hardworking <u>she is</u> employee of the month. RO	Lily is hardworking, so she is employee of the month. OR Lily is hardworking; therefore, she is employee of the month. OR Because Lily is hardworking, she is employee of the month. OR Lily is employee of the month because she is a hard worker.
CS	Comma Splice	Lily is a hard worker, <u>she is</u> employee of the month. CS	Same as above run-on corrections.
Frag	Fragment	She was selected. <u>Because</u> she sets a good example. Frag	She was selected because she sets a good example.
T	Transition Needed	Mt. SAC <u>has</u> many great services. <u>The Writing Center</u> helps students improve their writing.	Mt. SAC has many great services. For example, the Writing Center helps students improve their writing.
S	Subject Needed	<u>Is</u> open from 6 p.m. until the last customer leaves. S	The restaurant is open from 6 p.m. until the last customer leaves.
✓	Verb Needed	The employees <u>on</u> time and work hard. ✓	The employees are on time and work hard.
Prep	Preposition Needed	We start serving dinner <u>at</u> 6 p.m. Prep	We start serving dinner at 6 p.m.
Conj	Conjunction Needed	The garlic shrimp, fried clams, <u>and</u> broiled lobster are the most popular dishes. Conj	The garlic shrimp, fried clams, and broiled lobster are the most popular dishes.
Art	Article Needed	Diners expect <u>a</u> glass of water when they first sit down <u>at</u> the table. Art	Diners expect a glass of water when they first sit down at the table.
//	Faulty Parallelism	He enjoys watching movies, riding his bike, and <u>to go to</u> Disneyland. //	He enjoys watching movies, riding his bike, and going to Disneyland.
Coll	Slang/ Colloquialism	I am going <u>2</u> class right now. My daughter loves <u>PBJ</u> sandwiches. Coll	I am going to class right now. My daughter loves peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
DM	Dangling Modifier	<u>Going to the store</u> , the traffic was unusually heavy. DM	Going to the store, I noticed the traffic was unusually heavy. OR I realized the traffic was unusually heavy as I went to the store.

Syn	Syntax	I to the store with Dan <sup>Syn</sup> <u>went</u> .	I went to the store with Dan.
Awk	Awkward	<sup>Awk</sup> <u>The house of my mother is</u> always clean.	My mother's house is always clean.
Rep	Repetitive	This error occurs, often times, when a writer repeats the same idea, word(s), concepts, etc.	Take out repetitive material and revise accordingly.
???	Confusing Passage	Ideas are not clear to the reader.	Clarify ideas and revise accordingly.
¶	Begin a New Paragraph	Paragraph covers unrelated/new topic.	Look for a break in thoughts/ideas and revise accordingly.
→	Indent	The beginning of each paragraph should be intended.	Hit the "tab" button on the keyboard.





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The Academic Writing Reference Handbook is a writing tool that undergraduate students can use to elaborate a variety of texts that range from descriptive to argumentative. The handbook is the result of two years of ongoing research on the effectiveness of instructional, assessment, and peer-assistance strategies on students' compositional skills, implemented in an Academic Writing course at a Colombian public university. Findings from this study shed light on the selection and organization of the contents comprised in the AWRH. Strategies are grounded within a theoretical framework that includes the Writing Process Approach, Genre-based Instruction, error analysis and formative assessment. The AWRH highlights the importance of students following the Writing Process Approach, which begins with brainstorming ideas and continues with the elaboration of drafts, polished through professors' feedback and peer review. The handbook is organized around the writing genres most commonly found in college. For each genre, there is a description of the structure, recommended language and students' samples. Embracing writing tasks based on genres facilitates the identification of particular features that characterize each type of text. Given the importance of providing feedback to students, we included a chapter on time-efficient assessment instruments such as analytical rubrics that allow to zero in on specific writing features. Furthermore, genre-specific rubrics were designed to enhance the quality of the formative assessment process. To wrap up, the handbook provides writers with a series of insightful tips to foster excellent academic writing practices.

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